



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION 8, MONTANA OFFICE
FEDERAL BUILDING, 10 West 15th St, Suite 3200
HELENA, MONTANA 59626

Ref: 8MO

May 17, 2007

Mr. Paul Bradford, Forest Supervisor
Kootenai National Forest
1101 U.S. Highway 2 West
Libby, Montana 59923

Re: CEQ 20070164; Northeast Yaak
Final Supplemental EIS and Record
of Decision

Dear Mr. Bradford:

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region VIII Montana Office has reviewed the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (FSEIS) and Record of Decision for the Northeast Yaak Project in accordance with its responsibilities under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Section 309 of the Clean Air Act.

We appreciate inclusion of responses to EPA's comments on the draft Supplemental EIS in the FSEIS. While we have concerns about potential adverse effects to wildlife habitat, security and connectivity associated with the reopening of Vinal Lake Road #746 to motorized travel, we are pleased that the final selected alternative would close Road #746 during big game hunting season, and during spring and fall hunting and spring bear forage season.

As indicated in our earlier comments for this project, EPA supports Northeast Yaak Project objectives to improve conditions in old growth habitat and grizzly bear habitat, and particularly proposed activities that will reduce impacts of roads on water quality and fisheries, since roads are the single largest source of management related sediment in most watersheds, and reduction in road impacts will enhance habitat for native westslope cutthroat trout and interior redband trout (e.g., decommissioning of East Blacktail Roads #5816 and #5816A, and elimination of proposed temporary road in the Porcupine Creek watershed). We also appreciate additional review given to harvest units in the Koo Koo and Porcupine Creek drainages that posed erosion risks, and the commitment to do further reconnaissance to identify watershed restoration opportunities in these watersheds, and to coordinate proposed activities in water quality impaired (303(d) listed) watersheds with Montana DEQ and EPA TMDL



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staff.

We appreciate the opportunity to review the proposed project and participate in the NEPA process. If you have any questions regarding our input please contact Mr. Steve Potts of my staff in Helena at 406-457-5022 or in Missoula at 406-329-3313 or via e-mail at potts.stephen@epa.gov . Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

/s/

John F. Wardell
Director
Montana Office

cc: Larry Svoboda/Julia Johnson, EPA 8EPR-N, Denver